



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Protect yourself from carbon monoxide poisoning

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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As Alabamians clean up after Hurricane Ivan, many residences remain without power. The Alabama Department of Public Health urges extreme care in using portable generators and other devices that may result in carbon monoxide poisoning. Some machines used for cleanup also put off carbon monoxide gas.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warns that carbon monoxide gas cannot be seen or smelled, and it is a proven killer.

**The CDC advises that the public should never use generators, grills, camp stoves or other gasoline, propane, natural gas, or charcoal-burning devices inside a home, basement, garage or camper—or even outside near an open window.**

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that can cause sudden illness and death if breathed. When power outages occur during emergencies such as hurricanes, people often try to use alternative sources of fuel or electricity for heating, cooling, or cooking. CO from these sources can build up in a home, garage or camper and poison the people and animals inside. Look to friends or a community shelter for help. If you must use an alternative source of fuel or electricity, be sure to use it only outside and away from open windows.

**Every year, more than 500 people die from accidental carbon monoxide poisoning.**

Carbon monoxide is found in combustion fumes, such as those produced by small gasoline engines, stoves, generators, lanterns, and gas ranges, or by burning charcoal and wood. CO from these sources can build up in enclosed or partially enclosed spaces. People and animals in these spaces can be poisoned and can die from breathing CO in an enclosed or partially enclosed space.

### How to Recognize CO Poisoning

**Exposure to CO can cause loss of consciousness and death.** The most common symptoms of CO poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain and confusion. People who are sleeping or who have been drinking alcohol can die from CO poisoning before ever having symptoms. Consult a health care professional right away if suspect symptoms occur.

### Important Tips

- Never use a gas range or oven to heat a home.

- Never use a charcoal grill, hibachi, lantern, or portable camping stove inside a home, tent or camper.
- Never run a generator, pressure washer or any gasoline-powered engine inside a basement, garage, or other enclosed structure, even if the doors or windows are open, unless the equipment is professionally installed and vented. Keep vents and flues free of debris, especially if winds are high. Flying debris can block ventilation lines.
- Never run a motor vehicle, generator, pressure washer or any gasoline-powered engine outside an open window or door where exhaust can vent into an enclosed area.
- Never leave the motor running in a vehicle parked in an enclosed or partially enclosed space, such as a closed garage.

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